

# Bamboo bikes in spotlight as cyclists begin expedition

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**Chennai:** They're built for two, but made of bamboo. While titanium and aluminium alloys are the commonly used material for cycles, for a while now, designers and eco-activists have been working on ways to put the bamboo into the frame.

On Thursday, Mumbai-based cyclists Sumeet Paringe and Prisiliya Madan will begin their journey from Kanyakumari to Khardung La pass, covering the distance of approximately 4,200km on bamboo cycles made by Godrej and set to be launched this year, say sources.

The wheels are churning elsewhere too, for instance, at the National Institute of Design in Bengaluru, where Susanth C S, a professor of industrial design, and his team are developing "joineries" for bamboo bicycles, a product which they hope to launch in a couple of months. "The problem with bamboo bikes in India is that the process of making them is labourious and that increases the cost exponentially," says Susanth, who heads the NID's centre for bamboo initiatives. "Our bamboo



On Thursday, Sumeet Paringe and Prisiliya Madan from Mumbai will begin their journey from Kanyakumari to Khardung La on bamboo cycles. They intend to raise funds for education of girls through their expedition

joineries, or the link between the various parts of the cycle frame, will bring the costs down. Hopefully, then these eco-friendly cycles will become more popular and less expensive," he adds.

While such bikes are gaining popularity in several parts of the world like Malaysia and China, Ghana has begun a social project under which the bikes are distributed to school-going children. In India, the idea of bamboo on a bike hasn't really caught on. The first attempt at crafting a bamboo bike was by Bengaluru-based designer Vijay Sharma nearly a decade ago, but sales haven't got past double digits yet.

"Making a bamboo bike is labour-intensive. Every part needs to be handcrafted as there are no bicycle manufacturers who are willing to make the bamboo parts. Just making the frame costs ₹1,80,00. Bamboo bikes cost around ₹25,000 and people are not willing to experiment with that kind of money. So we need a way to bring the costs down," says Prashant Lingam of Hyderabad-based Bamboo House India, who also tried making bamboo bikes last year but gave up. "The advantages of the bamboo bike are that it is supposed to be more shock absorbing and consumes less energy," he adds.